

WASHINGTON--On December 19, 2007, Congressman Sestak voted for passage the Omnibus Appropriations bill (H.R. 2764), which would appropriate \$555 billion to fund programs covered by the 11 appropriation bills that have not been yet been enacted this year. This will include \$70 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. — “While I wish the Omnibus Appropriations package would have gone further in funding the priorities that we passed in all 12 of the House appropriation bills this year, I believe that this bill represents an important step towards shifting towards the priorities important to the American people” said Congressman Sestak. “Congress began its work this year having to fill unacceptable holes in our President’s budget, where he froze domestic spending programs leading to cuts in health care, education, homeland security, energy, and transportation infrastructure. Today, we will restore and make new investments in these key areas.”

With regard to funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, \$35.3 billion will be provided for Army operations and \$4 billion for the Marines. There was also \$6 billion provided for additional procurement for Army tanks and other armored vehicles, and \$4.3 billion to procure and develop counter measures to prevent attacks from Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

“I wore the cloth of the nation for 31 years in the United States Navy, and served alongside and in command of numerous men and women who have fought valiantly and selflessly in defense of their country. This funding will help support our troops by providing them with the equipment, infrastructure, and support our military needs both in combat and training until we redeploy from Iraq. The military is a dangerous business, but it does not have to be an unsafe business.” said Congressman Sestak, “The courageous men and women of our armed forces are a national treasure that should be supported and given the funding they need until we can redeploy them, safely. This means they must have the funding for their armament until a safe redeployment that will take at least a year, if not 15 to 24 months, to take effect. I will never place the assured safety of our troops between the Congress and the President when we differ on national security policy.

Furthermore, as Congressman Sestak explained in May, “I have never deviated from what I said when I began running for this office after 31 years of military service – that a date certain to redeploy from Iraq is the only viable strategy that will change the incentives for Iraqis, and Iran and Syria, to change their behavior and work for stability and an unfailed Iraqi state. I cannot vote to have these service members’ safety be caught between us and someone we hope will blink – for hope is not a strategy. But I have great faith that both sides of the aisle will [eventually] come together to determine an end date for what can no longer be an open ended

commitment in Iraq – not just for the security of our service members, but for America’s.”

More specifically, the Omnibus Appropriation Bill provides increases in funding in the following priority areas above the President’s budget request:

Health Care

- Veterans Health Care: \$3.7 billion above the President’s request to allow Veterans to access the quality health care they deserve.
- Medical Research: \$607 million above the President’s request to study diseases like Alzheimer’s, cancer, Parkinson’s and diabetes.
- Healthcare Access: \$1 billion above the President’s request, making targeted increases to programs like Community Health Centers to provide 280,000 more underinsured Americans with access to healthcare and High Risk Insurance Pools to help 200,000 more people afford health insurance.
- Public Health: \$393 million above the President’s request for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and funding primary public health activities.

Education/Workforce

- Head Start: providing \$114 million above the President’s request, to help sustain high quality preschool services for children currently enrolled in Head Start.
- K-12 Education: \$767 million above the President’s request with targeted increases to Title 1, Special Education, Teacher Quality Grants, After School Programs, and Head Start.
- College Cost for Students and Families: \$1.7 billion above the President’s request for Pell Grants and other student aid programs.
- Vocational Education: \$575 million above the President’s request for technical training at high schools and community colleges.
- Special Education – IDEA Part B Grants: \$550 million above the President’s request, reversing a two-year decline in the Federal contribution to help states and localities to educate 6.9 million children with disabilities.
- Training for Adult, Youth and Dislocated Workers: \$583 million above the President’s request, to preserve job training and employment assistance services for 166,000 workers.

Homeland Security

- State and Local Law Enforcement: \$1.2 billion above the President’s request to help local communities across the country.
- Homeland Security Grants: \$1.8 billion above the President’s request, recognizing that fighting terror must be a top priority. This includes: State Grants, including law enforcement (\$950 million), Urban Area Grants (\$820 million), Transit Grants (\$400 million), Emergency Management Performance Grants (\$300 million), Fire Grants (including SAFER) (\$750 million), Metropolitan Medical Response System (\$41 million), Interoperable Communications Grants (\$50 million), and Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grants (\$35 million).

Energy

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance: \$788 million above the President’s request, to help two million more low-income families and seniors than the President to cope with an anticipated colder winter and a 28 percent increase in home energy prices compared to last year.
 - Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency: \$486 million above the President’s request for important investments in Solar Energy, Wind Energy, Biofuels, and Energy Efficiency, with a careful blend of new scientific investments and conservation efforts.

Transportation Infrastructure/Economic Development

- Highway Infrastructure: Meets the guaranteed levels set in the authorization bill and provides a \$1 billion initiative for our bridges.
- Amtrak: \$425 million above the President’s request, to continue current services and improve railway infrastructure.
- Community Development Block Grants: \$556 million above the President’s request, to fund community and economic development projects in 1,180 localities.

The House originally passed a budget that would have been balanced by 2012, and would have enhanced key domestic priorities in education, energy and the environment, and the economy. Unfortunately, many of such priorities have been neglected and rejected by our President. This compromise Omnibus bill would provide less funding in a number of areas than the original House passed legislation, including:

- \$1.43 billion less for Title I funding for students at disadvantaged high schools

- \$1.36 billion less for funding Special Education – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Grants
- \$300 million less for funding programs within the Federal Transit Administration
- \$516 million less for the Office of Science, including a \$13 million reduction for Climate Change Science
- \$200 million less for programs that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil and cut greenhouse emissions
- \$37.5 million less for funding and developing energy efficient buildings
- \$370 million less from environmental clean-up programs which would clear contamination from 60 years of manufacturing nuclear weapons
- \$1.5 billion less in homeland security funding, including \$520 million less for First responder and Port Security Grant Programs, \$30 million less for Urban Area Grants, \$55 million less for SAFER Fire Grants
- \$13 million less for the Small Business Administration (SBA), including a \$10 million reduction for the 7(a) loan program, which provides small business owners with government-backed loans to enhance their businesses.